

## Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

1

2

MAY 5 - 1932

2  
19  
3 Hh  
HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, May 9, 1932

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Community Meals." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

- - - - -

This is a busy spring for community dinners, judging from my letter box. Last week I had a letter asking for a menu for a benefit meal to be given by a club of women in Minnesota. About five hundred guests expected. Then came two letters from New England asking about church suppers. Another from New York State inquired about a spring grange dinner. All these letters asked for a menu for a good but economical meal and something a little different from the ordinary if possible.

Thinking them over takes me back to my first year out of school when I was teaching in a small town where benefit dinners were the chief form of raising money. Every church gave a dinner frequently and most of the clubs and organizations of various sorts had several during the winter. Well, before that season was over I had eaten more community meals than I ever wanted to think of again. You see, people in that town had fallen into a rut about menus. Every one of these group meals was just like every other. Practically the same menu every time whether the meal was given by the Ladies Aid of the First Church or the Women's Auxiliary or the Friday circle. That menu! Dear me. How well I remember it. Always the same. Either baked beans and cold ham, scalloped potatoes or potato salad, white bread and butter, and, for dessert, several kinds of pie and several kinds of cake--all donated, of course, and coffee. That was the meal served not only month in and month out at these affairs but year in and year out. Most of us attended only from a sense of duty. And no wonder. Please notice how unbalanced the menu is. Both baked beans and ham, for example. Two main dishes aren't needed. And then the rest--bread, potatoes, cake and pie. Such an overdose of starch and sugar. No vegetables, no salad, no fruit except in the pie. Dreary and unappetizing--that's what those meals were.

But community meals can be most pleasant and profitable occasions if they are well planned and managed.

Of course, there's this matter of expense to be considered. Most community meals must make money or at least pay for themselves. And that





means a Scotch eye'out to the pennies all along the line. But you can serve a tip-top meal yet an inexpensive one. In planning what to serve there are several things to consider. The season of the year, for one thing, will determine what foods are available at the least cost.

"Oh," you say, "but we want this dinner to be different. We don't want to serve the common everyday foods."

You can make it different by preparing and serving the everyday foods in delicious and unusual ways. Such dishes will please your guests quite as much as out-of-season or high-cost foods.

Then you'll want to plan on the number to be served and the price to be asked. These will determine your choice of foods on the menu. So will the equipment you have to work and serve with. If you are to serve your dinner in a modern, up-to-date cafeteria room with steam table, serving counter, vegetable parer and large refrigerators, you can serve almost any food you chose. But if your equipment is limited, if there isn't very much room in the kitchen, either for cooling or keeping things hot, or if your working conditions aren't very convenient, be sure to avoid too elabroate and difficult a meal. Under such conditions, the more food that can be brought, all prepared, from home, the better.

The Recipe Lady has often managed large quantity meals, so I went over yesterday and to get suggestions from her on the subject. For one thing, she suggested that it's wise to choose only those dishes that can be prepared easily in large quantities. It's all right to add frills when you're preparing for a small afternoon tea or a little home dinner, but when you're feeding fifty or more people, the simple, easy dishes are best. Also the Recipe Lady says that it's a good idea to plan food that can be prepared ahead of time and will not be harmed by standing. Foods to avoid are those that melt quickly, that are too moist and likely to make the plate look untidy, or those that will get overcooked when kept hot, or get cold during serving. For example, suppose you are deciding on a first course. There's soup or fruit cocktail to choose from. Fruit cocktail is the wise selection for a crowd. Soup is only at its best when it is piping hot and in serving a large number, it's difficult to keep it hot, and difficult for inexperienced waitresses to carry.

Everything and anything that can be done the day before, will save time and help the affair go smoothly. If there's plenty of refrigerator space, a gelatin salad is a good item because it can be fixed a day ahead and you won't have to bother with it until time for serving. To save dishwashing make the individual salad molds in little paper cups.

Other successful dishes for such a dinner are creamed foods in a patty shell or on toast, or scalloped dishes. These are not only good but the cream sauce makes the food go farther. If your group is well known for a special kind of cake or hot bread, make that the feature dish of the meal and use it in advertising your dinner.

The meal will be successful only if it is so well planned ahead of time that there is no last-minute confusion. It's up to the chairman to see to that. If she's a good executive, she'll have everything down in black and white, from the menu and market order to the plan of procedure. She'll have everyone's duties outlined. The best way to save time and confusion is



to have a definite person for each job and to let her know ahead of time just exactly what she is responsible for. The chairman with her plans in hand will oversee and keep things running smoothly.

"Now about the time for serving your dinner," said the Recipe Lady. "I've learned that it's much easier to invite the guests all to come at a certain definite hour rather than from say six to eight. This means that everyone sits down at once, that the food doesn't have to stand, that there's no confusion for the waitresses in knowing who's been served and who hasn't."

I asked the Recipe Lady how to plan the amounts of food needed for large numbers.

"Base your estimate on the amounts used to serve your family at home," she said. "But remember that food prepared in large quantity goes much farther. And foods served in sauce--cream sauce or some other-- also go farther than plain foods. For example, if you are serving baked potatoes, you will allow a potato apiece for each guest. But with creamed potatoes, you'll find that you only need two potatoes to serve every three people."

So much for the general suggestions. Now for the menus. I have here two menus, both economical ones, suitable for large quantity meals. The quantities I'll give you will serve 50 people.

Have you some pages in your notebook where you can jot down these menus for safekeeping? Take them down today and then the next time your church or club is giving a dinner, you'll be all ready with ideas.

Ready for Menu No. I? Meat balls in tomato sauce. (For fifty people you'll need 10 pounds of meat. This will allow for two small balls or one large one on each plate.) Next, scalloped potatoes. (Ten or twelve pounds of potatoes to serve 50) Green beans (Ten or twelve pounds.) Pickles or relish. Hot biscuits or rolls, buttered in the kitchen before serving. Ice cream with pineapple sauce. Homemade cake. Coffee.

There's Menu No. 1. I'll go over it again just to be sure you have every item. Meat balls in tomato sauce; Green beans; Scalloped potatoes; Pickles or relish; Hot biscuits or rolls; Ice cream with pineapple sauce; Homemade cake and coffee. If green beans are too expensive in your market substitute some other green vegetable, perhaps peas.

Now are you ready for the second inexpensive menu with quantities needed for fifty? Menu No. II. Savory creamed chicken. (The recipe for this is in the green cookbook on page 25.) Multiply the recipe in the book by five. You'll need five chickens weighing from 4 to 5 pounds each. And increase the amount of celery to 2 cups which will mean 10 cups for your large quantity in the small recipe. The creamed chicken may be served on thin crisp pieces of toast to keep it from spreading on the plate. Next, baked stuffed potatoes; beans; hot rolls, jellied vegetable salad made with shredded cabbage, grated raw carrot; red and green peppers, and a lemon gelatin base. For dessert, apricot and prune pie dusted with powdered sugar and coffee.







If you are planning a community supper, I'll be glad to send you a copy of this chat. Just write for the talk on community meals. And if you have any questions or want more information on the subject, write me and I'll refer your letter to the specialists at the Bureau of Home Economics.

TOMORROW: "Underwear to Suit The Season."

